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Popular Poetry of the Russian Jews

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POPULAR POETRY OF THE RUSSIAN JEWS.

I.

According to Harkavy[1] and Beršadskij[2] there were few, if any, German Jews in Poland and Russia previous to the fifteenth century. In the second half of the sixteenth their permanent residence there in large numbers is attested by the fact that several presses in these Slavic countries issued Judeo-German books. In the next century their number must have been very considerable in comparison with those who were left over in Germany, or who had settled in Holland, for many of the works published in the Mother Country and in the Netherlands had mainly in view their readers in Poland, while some were anxious to procure letters patent, amounting to copyrights, from Polish kings.[3] We have also an internal evidence in the language that the immigration, at least the one that gave rise to the Jewish communities in Slavic countries, must have taken place not earlier than the fifteenth and not later than the first half of the sixteenth century. The latest limit is to be found in the fact that the modern three varieties of Slavo-Judeo-German clearly represent evolutions of the idiom found in the earliest prints,

[1] A. Harkavy, Jazyk evreev, živšix v drevnee vremja na Rusi, St. Petersburg, 1866. [2] S. A. Beršadskij, Litovskie evrei, St. Petersburg, 1883. [3] Such a one, for example, was granted by John III, of Poland, to the printers of the Blitz Bible, and is given in Latin and Judeo-German in the introduction of the same.

while the early New High German forms found in them point to a period later than the beginning of the fifteenth century. The Germanic part of the language represents seventy per cent of the total vocabulary; the grammatical structure is almost entirely Germanic, but the syntax shows a strong admixture of Slavic thought. The twenty per cent of Hebrew and ten per cent of Slavic words that enter into its composition in no way disguise the German form of the language, and the same must be placed dialectally with the varieties of the Middle Rhine, particularly with those of Frankfurt and Worms.

The Jews have carried the German language, and, with it, German culture, farthest East, and it is due to their exceptional position under the Magdeburg right in Poland and, later, to their extreme oppression that they have preserved comparatively intact their German inheritance. But it was not so easy to escape the moral and mental influence of their surroundings, and in consequence the Russian and Polish Jews have come as much under the influence of the Slavic intellectual atmosphere as they had originally been under the German; add to this their rigid adherance to the Mosaic ritual and their Hebrew training, and we get a most extraordinary mixture of Germanic, Slavic and Semitic elements, such as is probably not to be found elsewhere on the globe. Their folklore, which offers an endless, unexplored field to the investigator, illustrates this mixture very well. It knows all the mythical animals of the Talmud as well as the *pipernoter* (-vipernatter-Lindwurm); air and earth are peopled with the Semitic *mejsim*, *dibukim*, *gilgulim*, *lejcim*, with the German *rizn* (-Riesen), *šrejtele* (-Schrätelein), the Slavic *zlidne*, *ništguter* (-nie dobry) and *domowoj;* in cases of sickness of the evil eye, the superstitious Jew will consult indifferently his Talmudic lore, the Little-Russian *znaxarka*, or the Tartar medicine-man.

So, too, the Jewish folkmusic, as well as the Synagogical music, shows that strange welding of different elements; one now imagines he hears the strains of a German mediæval *Lied*, set in a minor key, now one listens to the pining tones of the

Little-Russian *kobzar'*, as he accompanies his melancholy *duma*, or the wanton refrain of the Polish *krakowiak*. In the same way, the words of the folksongs themselves betray their various origin or mixture. Environment generally affects their composition. I have in my collection a lullaby from the Baltic provinces, which is nothing else than a well-known hymn of Luther's in which the Christian dogma has been eliminated and an orthodox formula substituted. From the Gouv. of Suwalk, close to the German border, the following song by its very language shows its German borrowing:

"Gutn[1] morgn, kuperšmid!"
"Šejn dank dem kesler!"
"Wilstu majn šwoger zajn,
Hejrat di šwester!"

Ix hob gehert, di fafenfrouen
Zicn in di haln,—
Liberšt nem ix a šuster a man,
Hob ix fil gezeln.

Ix o gehert, di šusterfrouen
Muzn di opzacn pakn,—
Liberšt nem ix a šnajder a man,
Ob ix wos cu latn.
.....

[1] The poems, on which the present investigation is founded, are almost all from my private manuscript collection; they were taken down from the mouths of Russian Jews resident in Boston and New York, and represent the various dialects and subdivisions of the language. The transliteration is phonetic; the consonants marked with an apostrophe represent the Russian palatalized sounds, while š = E. sh, č = E. tch, ž = E. zh, x = G. ch (in *ach*), z = E. z, c = G. z. It will be readily seen that several varieties of Judeo-German have incorporated the palatalized sounds also in words of German origin. The following rules, embodying the vowel changes from German, will be found of service: G. *ā* becomes *o* in Lithuania, *â* in the South and Poland; G. *ă* remains unchanged; G. *ē* and *ĕ* becomes *ej* and *e* respectively; G. *ō* becomes *öj* and *ej* (according to localities) in Lithuania, *öj* and *oj* in Poland, and *oj* in the South; G. *ŏ* remains unchanged; G. *ū* becomes *u* in Lithuania, and *î* elsewhere; G. *ŭ* remains unchanged, but in the South it is frequently changed to *i* or *y* (in Galicia); G. *ei*, from M. H. G. î, is *aj* in Lithuania, *âj* in Poland, and *â* in the South, while G. *ei*, from M. H. G. *ei*, is *ej* in the North, and *aj* in the South; G. *au* becomes *ou* or *öj*, and, in the South, occasionally *oj*.

Ix o gehert, di flejšerfrouen
Hobm faršmucte tašn,—
Liberšt nem ix a cukern'ik[1] a man,
Hob ix wos cu našn.

Ix o gehert, di cukern'ikfrouen
Muzn fil farborgn,—
Libertš blajb ix a junge frou,
Hob ix ništ wos cu zorgn !

The following poem, from the Gouv. of Kamenec-Podolsk, is a remodelling of a well-known Russian folksong:

Wi zänt[2] ir, mane jinge jûrn,
Wi zänt ir ain gikimen?
Ci[3] mitn fajer farbränt giworn,
Ci mitn waser awägišwimen?

"Špant mir ajn, špant mir ajn
Dem bästn fejrd in wûgn !
Nomir[4] lojfn, nomir lojfn
Unzere jinge jûrn derjûgn !"

Mir zänen gilofn,[5] mir zänen gilofn
Iber di bräjte brikn:
"Kejrt zax im, kejrt zax im !
Mir wäln[6] zax mit âx derkwikn !"

"Mir wäln zax ništ imkejrn, mir wäln zax ništ imkejrn,
Wajl's iz ništu ci wäjmen ![7]
Ir ot cât giat, ir ot cât giat,
Inz frîer ci bašejnen!"

Although borrowing from the nations surrounding them, the Jews have not been their slavish imitators, but have welded the material into a new form, in conformity with their own spirit. They have been preëminently inhabitants of towns; their very admission into Poland was based on the supposition that they

[1] Confectioner, *Pol.* [2] Where are you, *Ger.* [3] Particle introducing a question, *Pol.* czy. [4] Let us, *G.* [5] We did run, *G.* [6] We shall, *G.* [7] For we have nobody to come to, *lit.* for there is not to whom (trans. from Russian *ne k komu*).

would be instrumental in creating towns and cities, from which the agricultural Slavs kept aloof. Centuries of city life have incapacitated them for any other occupation than commerce and artisanship and have entirely estranged them from nature. On the other hand, their civil disabilities and oppression have led them to cling more closely to the Bible and their religious lore, than was customary among their correligionists in other lands. It is in these Slavic countries that the Talmud was rediscovered and that it was introduced to the rest of Judaism. All these circumstances developed in them a strong retrospective spirit, so that in the center of their intellectual horizon stands man in all his varying moods and vicissitudes of fortune. Consequently all their folksongs have more or less of a lyrical tinge, and the consideration of nature is almost entirely absent from them; occasionally a flower, a natural phenomenon finds a passing mention in them, but they are never used for their own intrinsic interest. Outside of himself, the Jew knows only his duties to God and His duties to man, as flowing from his duties to God. Not feeling himself as a constituent part of a nation, having no other union with his fellowmen except that of religion, he could never rise to the appreciation and formation of an epic poem, although the material for such a one was present in the very popular legend of the one-day king, Saul Wahl.[1]

The cradle songs reflect this spirit. While babies of Gentiles hear meaningless nursery rhymes or comical ditties, the Jewish infants are early made acquainted with the serious aspects of life. They are told of the ideal of their future occupation, which is commerce, they are spurred on to "töjre," which is learning, mainly religious, and they are reminded that they must remain an "erlixer," *i. e.* an orthodox, Jew. The following poem is, probably, the most popular song in Judeo-German, as it is sung from Galicia to Siberia, and from the Baltic provinces to Roumania:

[1] A complete discussion of this subject, from the pen of Beršadskij, appeared a few years ago in the Russian monthly *Vosxod*.

Inter Jânkeles[1] wigele
Štejt a klor-wajs cigele:
Cigele iz gifurn handlen
Rožinkelax[2] mit mandlen.
Rožinkelax mit mandlen
Zanen[3] di bäste sxojre,[4]
Jânkele wet lejrnen tojre,[5]
Tojre wet er lejrnen,
Briwelax[6] wet er šrâbm,
In an ejrlixer Id
Wet er af tomid[7] farblâbm.

Another cradle song, from the Gouv. of Grodno, more perfect in form, inculcates in its last strophe the same principle:

Šlof že,[8] šlof, majn tajer kind,
Max že cu di ejgelax gix[9] un gešwind!
Dajn esn un dajn trinkn štejt šejn grejt[10] do,
Max že cu di ejgelax af etlexene[11] šo![12]
.....
Dir iz dox ict[13] ajn jeder mekane![14]
Weste mirčem[15] zajn a grejser tane,[16]
West dox dajne eltern becirn un bešejnen
Past dox ništ far dir cu pješčen[17] zax un cu wejnen!

But commerce and learning are not for girls. They are generally incapacitated for the first by their onerous duties of home; while learning, at least a knowledge of the Sacred language and its lore, has never been regarded as a requisite of woman. She received her religious instruction and ethical training by means of Judeo-German books which owe their very origin to the necessity of educating her. The name of the script in which all these books of the past three centuries are printed is "Weiber-deutsch," indicating at once the use to which it was put. The title pages of the works generally tell that they are "gar hipsch bescheidlich far frume weiber un meidlich," or that "di weiber

[1] Dim. of Jajnkef, Jacob. [2] Raisins, *G.* [3] Are, *G.* [4] Merchandise, *H.* [5] Religious lore, *H.* [6] Epistles, *G.* [7] Forever, *H.* [8] Precative particle, *R.* [9] Quickly, *G.* [10] Ready, *G.* [11] A few, *G.* [12] Hours, *H.* [13] Now. *G.* [14] Envious, *H.* [15] If Heaven grant it, *H.* [16] Scholar, *H.* [17] Fret, *P.*

un meidlich di weil damit vertreiben di heiligen teg." The biblical injunction "fructify and multiply yourself" invests family life with a special sacredness, throws a gloom over the childless home, and leads this people to regard motherhood as the ideal state of the Jewish woman. All these sentiments find frequent expressions in their songs, and while the infant boy is lulled to sleep with a recitation of his future manly virtues, the baby girl hears in her cradle:

Tamus,[1] du damele,[2]
Westu zajn ajn mamele.[3]

Childhood alone claims exemption from oppressing thoughts and gloom: childhood must have its merriments, its pranks, its wantonness, no matter how serious life is to become later, or how soon it is to be ended. With the Jew youth, indeed, lasts but "an hour," and in after-life he has many an occasion to regret its short duration:

Jorn klejne,
Jorn šejne,
Wos zent ir[4] azöj wejnig do?
Ir zent nor gekumen,
Me hot ajx šejn oufgenumen,
Un zent nor gewen ba unz ejn šo![5]

Jorn junge,
Jorn gringe,
Wos zent ir azöj gix[6] awek?
Es zet ajx nit kajn ejgl,[7]
Es derjogn ajx nit di fejgl,
Ir zent awek gor on ajn ek![8]

The number of ditties sung by children is very great. They do not in general differ from similar popular productions of other nations, either in form or content; some are evidently identical

[1] The fourth month in the Jewish calendar, coinciding with the second half of June and the first of July, *H.* [2] Little lady, *G.* [3] Little mother, *G.* [4] Why are you, *G.* [5] Hour, *H.* [6] Quickly, *G.* [7] Little eye, *G.* [8] Without an end, *i. e.* forever, *G.*

with German songs, while a few are Slavic borrowings. To the latter class belong the four-lined verses:

Cigele migele kotena,[1]
Röjte pomerancen,
Az[2] der tate[3] šlogt di mame,
Gejen di kinderlax tancen,

of the nature of which there are endless variations, and the many doggerels detracting some special name, such as:

Jajnkele Jajnkele majner,
S'warcer cigajner!
Wu biste gelegn?
Unter a wic'ke.[4]
Wos hoste gezejgn?
A xazers'e[5] cic'ke.[6]

But there are two classes of songs peculiarly Jewish; the mnemonic lines for the study of Hebrew words, and those that depict the ideal course of a boy's life. To the first belongs:

Ejle toldes Nojax:[7]
Fyn br'onfn[8] ot men kojax,[9]
Wân iz der iker,[10]
Fyn br'onfn wet men[11] šiker.[12]
Ow iz a futer,
Ke jder iz a tuter,[13]
A tuter iz kejder,
Bigudim iz klejder,
.....
Majim iz waser,
Waser iz majim,
Lomir[14] trinkn lexajim![15]

with its lines extensible ad libitum, and a number of similar productions; the second is an extension of the cradle song, as given above:

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[1] Rhyme jingle, in which the first word is "goat," the third kitten, and the second, probably, onomatopoetic for 'bleating.' [2] When, *G.* [3] Father, *P.* [4] Switch, *White Russian.* [5] Hog's, *H.* [6] Teat, *R.* [7] The first three words of Genesis VI, 9: These are the generations of Noah. [8] Brandy, *G.* [9] Strength, *H.* [10] The important thing, *H.* [11] One becomes, *G.* [12] Drunk, *H.* [13] Tartar, *R.* [14] Let us. [15] To our healths, *H.*

....
A klejne wajle weln mir[1] s'piln,
Dem kind in xejder[2] weln mir fîrn,
Wet er lernen a por s'ures,[3]
Wern mir hern gute ps'ures,[4]
Gute ps'ures mit fil majles,[5]
Cu der xupe[6] paskenen[7] s'ajles.[8]
's et zajn gefeln[9] der gancer welt,
Xosn-kale[10]—a fule gelt,[11]
A fule gelt mit mazel-broxe,[12]
Xosn-kale—a s'ejne mis'poxe,[13]
S'ejne mis'poxe mit s'ejnem trest,[14]
Oges'telt[15] af draj jor kest.[16]
.....

The man's career used to run in just such a stereotyped manner: at a tender age, when children have not yet learned to properly articulate their speech, he was sent to the "xejder," the elementary Jewish school; long before the romantic feeling has its rise in youth, he was betrothed and married, but unable to earn a livelihood for the family with which he prayed to be blessed, he had to stay for a number of years with his parents or parents-in-law, eating "kest" or board; this time he generally passed in the Talmud school, perfecting himself in the casuistry of religious discussion, while the woman at once began to care for her ever increasing family. Under such conditions love could not flourish, at least not that romantic love of which the young Gentiles dream and which finds its utterance in their popular poetry. The word love does not exist in the Judeo-German dictionary, and wherever that feeling, with which they have become acquainted only since the middle of this century, is to be named, the Jews have to use the German word "Liebe." The man's hope was to marry into some "šejne mišpoxe," a good and respected family, while the girl's dream was to get a husband

[1] We shall, *G.* [2] School, *H.* [3] Lines, *H.* [4] News, *H.* [5] Good qualities, *H.* [6] Marriage baldachin, *H.* [7] Decide, *H.* [8] Religious questions, *H.* [9] It will please, *G.* [10] Bridegroom and bride, *H.* [11] A great deal of money, *G.* [12] Blessings, *H.* [13] Family, *H.* [14] Apparel, *G.* [15] Remaining, *G.* [16] Board, *G.*

who was well versed in "raboniše töjre," *i. e.*, Jewish lore. While the boy, by his occupation with the Bible and the Talmud, was taught to look on marriage as on an act pleasing to God, the girl was freer to allow her fancy to roam in the realms bordering on the sensations of love.

S'ejn bin ix, s'ejn, un s'ejn iz majn nomen :
Ret men mir s'iduxim[1] fun grejse rabonim.[2]
Rabonis'e tejre iz zejr grejs,
Un ix baj majn mamen[3] a c'ixtige[4] rejz.
A rejz iz afn dax,
A lixtige[5] naxt,
Waser iz in štub, holc iz in hojz,
Welxer boxer[6] hob ix fajnt, trajb ix im arojs ;
Fis'elax in waser, krepelax[7] in puter,
Welxer boxer hot mix fajnt, a rix[8] in zajn muter !

But such an exultation of free choice could be only passing, as the match was made without consulting her feelings in the matter; her greatest concern was that she might be left an old maid, while her companions pass into the ordained state of matrimony. Songs embodying this fear are quite common ; the following is one of them :

Zič ix[9] mir afn štejn,
Nemt mir on[10] a grejs gewejn :
Ale mejdlax obm xasene,[11]
Nor ix blajb alejn.
Oj wej, morgnštern !
Wen wel ix a kale[12] wern,
Ci[13] hajnt, ci morgn ?
A šejne mejdel bin ix dox,
Un a rajxn tatn[14] ob ix dox !

In the more modern songs in which the word " love " is used that word represents that legitimate inclination for the opposite sex which culminates in marriage, as :

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[1] Matches, *H.* [2] Rabbis, *H.* [3] Mother, *G.* [4] Pretty, *G.* [5] Clear, *G.* [6] Boy, *H.* [7] Fritters, *G.* [8] An evil ghost, *H.;* May the evil spirit enter your father, mother, etc., is a common curse. [9] I sit, *G.* [10] Seizes me, *G.* [11] Wedding, *H.* [12] Bride, *H.* [13] Whether—or, *P.* [14] Father, P.

Ax, wi šmekt mir dos libele
In majn hercens gribele !
Mit majn man, mit majn man
In ajn klejne štibele !

Now, that love and love matches are not uncommon, it is again woman who is the strongest advocate of them ; love songs addressed by men to women are rare, and they may be recited with equal propriety by the latter. The chief characteristic of woman's love, as expressed in them, is constancy and depth of feeling.

S'warc binste,[1] s'warc, azej wi a cigajner,
Ix o[2] gemejnt, az du west zajn majner ;
S'warc binste, ober mit xejn,[3]
Far wemen du binst mies,[4] far mir binste šejn ;
Šejn binste, wi zilber, wi gold,
Wer 's ot dix fajnt,[5] un ix o dix holt.
Fun ale felern ken a doktor ophejln,
Di libe fun majn hercn ken ix far kejnem nit dercejln.

Many are the songs of pining for the distant lover ; they show all the melancholy touches of similar Slavic love ditties and are the most poetical of all the Jewish songs. They range from the soft regrets of the lover's temporary absence to the deep and gloomy despair of the betrothed one's death, though the latter is always tempered by a resignation which comes from implicit faith in the ways of Heaven. Here are a few of them in illustration of the various forms which this pining assumes :

Bajm breg[6] waser tu ix štejn
Un ken cu dir nit kumen,
Oj, fun wajtens rufstu mix,
Ix ken ober nit šwimen !

Finster iz majn welt,
Majn jugent iz s'warc,
Majn glik iz farštelt,
Es fojlt mir majn harc.

---

[1] You are, *G.* [2] I have, *G.* [3] Grace, *H.* [4] Homely, *H.* [5] Some may not like you, *G.* [6] Edge, *Sl.*

Es citert mir jetwider [1] ejwer,[2]
Es kilt mir dos blut,
Mit dir in ejn kejwer [3]
Wet mir zajn gut.

Ax, wos wilste, muter, hobm,
Wos muc'estu [4] dajn kind?
Wos wilste mir bagrobm?
Far wosere [5] zind?

Ix ob kejn naxas [6] gehat,
Nor lejdn un kumer,
Ix welk wi ejn blat,
Wi ejn blum sof [7] zumer.

Wu nem ix majn frajnd,
Xoc' [8] ejf ejn s'o?[9]
Ale hobm mir fajnt,
Un du binst [10] nito.[11]

Ix gej mir arojs di štejtele[12] ojscikikn,[13]
Flit derex[14] a šejner fojgl in tit mir majn arc[15] derkwikn,—
Nit azoj[16] zajn šejnkajt, wi zajn ojx[17] flîen,
A brîwele ot er mir arugebraxt,[18] wos kimt un fin Wîn.
Ix näm dus brîwele in der and, ejb es un[19] ci lejenen,[20]
's ot mir azoj farklemt bam arc, 'x ob až[21] ungefangen wejnen:
"Ci wejnen el ix ubm,[22] mame-lejb,[23] azoj wi ejner af a kûrbm!"[24]
Ix lejen iber di lecte šîre,[25] majn zis lejbm iz šejn gištorbm,
Er iz šejn gištorbm in mi[26] ot im šejn bagrubm,
Er zol lojfn far mir zax mîen,[27] un in Ganejdn[28] zol er dortn ubm![29]

Tojzenter menc'n s'pacirn gegangn—
Gegangn zajnen[30] zej glajx,
In ajn wajle hert zax ajn raš:[31]
"Ratewet[32] ajn menc'n fun tajx!"

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[1] Every, *G.* [2] Member, *H.* [3] Grave, *H.* [4] Vex, *R.* [5] What kind of, *G.* [6] Joy, *H.* [7] End, *H.* [8] At least, *P.* [9] Hour, *H.* [10] Are, *G.* [11] Not here, *G.* [12] Little town, *G.* [13] Look about, *G.* [14] Flies through, *G.* [15] Heart, *G.* [16] Not so much, *G.* [17] High, *G.* [18] Brought down, *G.* [19] I begin, *G.* [20] Read, *French* (?). [21] A Russian strengthening particle; the sentence means: so that I could not keep from crying. [22] I shall have occasion to cry, *G.* [23] Mother dear, *G.* [24] Sacrifice, *H.* [25] Line, *H.* [26] Man, *G.* [27] To put in a word for me, *G.* [28] Paradise, *H.* [29] May he have his reward, *G.* [30] Had gone, *G.* [31] Noise, *H.* [32] Save, *P.*

S'warce wolkn dem himl bacejgn,
Di zun iz arop mit ajnmol,—
Wi er iz in waser arajn,
Hot men derkont zajn kol.[1]

Wi me hot em fun waser arojsgenumen,
Azej[2] ot men gemaxt a plan:
Tojzenter menc'n cu der micwe[3] zax genumen,
Cu ratewen[4] a jungn man.

Wi me hot em fun waser arojsgecejgn,
Azej iz gewen di fiselax cubisn,
Wi me hot em af di tare-bret[5] arufgelejgt,
Azej ot men di tnoim[6] curisn.

Zi s'tejt lebm em,
Trern gisn fun ire ejgn:
"Ribejnešelejlem,[7] bawajz mir dajn wunder
Wi azej[8] men wet em in kejwer[9] lejgn!"

"Mamen'u l'uben'u,[10] mamen'u harcen'u![11]
Der trejst iz fun mir ajnwek,[12]—
Ix wolt zix wins'n in ejnem zajn,
Un fun mir zol zajn ajn ek!"[13]

"Toxtern'u[14] l'uben'u, toxtern'u harcen'u!
Cu[15] den biste ejne af der welt?
Der tejt klajbt nit iber,[16] saj[17] alt, saj jung,
Af deruf[18] iz ges'telt di welt."

"Zajne zaxn, wos[19] er ot getrogn—
Ix el[20] dos gewis baklogn—
Ix el cus'enkn oreme boxerimlax,[21]
Zej zoln noch em tilim[22] zogn!"

With the same feeling that prompts the Jewish woman to repeat the prayer: "O Lord, I thank thee that thou has created

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[1] Voice, *H.* [2] So, *G.* [3] Deserving act, *H.* [4] Save, *P.* [5] Bier, *H. G.* [6] Certificate of betrothal, *H.* [7] Lord of the world, *H.* [8] As soon as, *G.* [9] Grave, *H.* [10] Dear little mother, Slavic diminutives of *mame* (G. Mama) and Sl. *luba.* [11] Sl. dim. of *harc.* [12] All consolation has left me, *G.* [13] There should be an end of me, *G.* [14] Sl. dim. of *Tochter.* [15] P. interrogative particle. [16] Does not choose, *G.* [17] Whether—or, *G.* [18] On this, *G.* [19] Which, *G.* [20] I shall, *G.* [21] Young men, *H.* [22] Psalms, *H.*

me according to thy will!" while the man prays: "I thank thee that thou hast created me a man," she regards her disappointments in love as perfectly natural, for

Ict[1] trog ix a gröjs nidnist[2] in harc,
Dos iz dox der nekejwes[3] rewoxim,[4]

and the inconstancy of man, which forms the subject of all songs of unhappy love, does not call forth recriminations and curses, which one would expect, but only regrets at her own credulity:

Ix hob eršt beklert,[5]
Az[6] mir zenen[7] alc[8] wert,
Unz wajber darf[9] men brenen un brotn,
Mir trogn in harcn ranes,[10]
Wajl mir glejbm šarlatanes,
Mir gebm iber unzer lebm dem šotn.[11]

One would imagine that the wedding day must appear as the happiest in the life of the woman, but such is not the case. With it begin all the tribulations for which she is singled out, and the jestmaker,[12] who is always present at the ceremony of uniting the pair, addresses the bride with the words:

Kalen'u,[13] kalen'u, wejn!
Der xûsn[14] wät dir šikn a šisele mit xrejn,[15]
Wäst dax basmarkn[16] biz in di fule cejn,[17]

inviting her to weep instead of smiling, and he follows this doggerel with a discussion of the vanities of life and the sadness of woman's lot. Even if her marital happiness should be unmarred by any unfaithfulness of her husband—and Jewish men for the greater part are good husbands and fathers—there are the cares

[1] Now, *G.* [2] Sickness, *Sl.* [3] Woman's, *H.* [4] Reward, *H.* [5] Considered, *G.* [6] That, *G.* [7] Are, *G.* [8] Everything, *G.* [9] Ought to, *G.* [10] Wounds, *R.* [11] Satan, *H.* [12] The second part of this article will tell of his functions at the wedding and his influence in disseminating popular poetry. [13] Sl. dim. of Heb. *kale*, bride. [14] Bridegroom, *H.* [15] Horse raddish, *Sl.* [16] Snivel, *R.* [17] Down to your very teeth, *G.*

of earning the daily bread, which frequently fall on the woman, while the stronger vessel is brooding over some Talmudical subtelties, there are the eternal worries over the babies, and worse of all the proverbial mother-in-law if the wife chances to board with her for the first few years after marriage. The ideal of the Jewess is but a passing dream, and no one can escape the awakening to a horrible reality:

A mejdele wert a kale[1]
In ejn rege,[2] in ejn minut,
Mit ir frejen zax ale,
Di frejd iz nor cu ir.

Der xosn[3] s'ikt prezentn,
Zi wert gor naj geborn,
Wen zi tut zax on,[4]
Wins't zi 'm lange jorn.

Zi gejt mitn xosn s'pacirn
Un tut in s'pigele a kik,[5]
S'tejen ejlem[6] mens'n
Un zajnen mekane[7] dem glik.

Ot[8] firt men zi cu der xupe,
Un ot firt men zi curik,
S'tejen a kupe[9] mejdlax
Un zajnen mekane dem glik.

Af morgn nox der xupe,[10]
Di frajmut iz nox in gancn:
Der xosn zict wi a mejlax[11]
Un di kale gejt zax tancn.

Draj jor nox der xupe
Der frajmut iz s'em[12] arop:
Di junge wajbl gejt arum
Mit a cudrejter kop.

---

[1] Bride, *H.* [2] Moment, *H.* [3] Bridegroom, *H.* [4] Attires herself, *G.* [5] Glances in the mirror, *G.* [6] Crowd, *H.* [7] Envy, *H.* [8] Now, *Sl.* [9] Crowd, *P.* [10] Wedding, *H.* [11] King, *H.* [12] Already, *G.*

"Oj wej, muter, muter,
Ix wil fun dir nit hern,
Ix wolt s'em beser weln[1]
Curik a mejdel wern!"

She would like to be a girl again, which she still is in years, for while she rocks the cradle, her companions dance and sing:

Ništ kejn bsule,[2] nor a frou,
Aj l'u l'u l'u—hober štrou!
Andere mejdlex cuker našn,
Ix dem kinds windelex wašn!
Andere mejdlex tancn, springn,
Ix wel aj l'u l'u l'u zingn!

Pathetic are the recitals of suffering at the house of her husband's parents, where she is treated worse than a menial, where she is without the love of a mother to whom she is attached more than to any one else, and where she ends miserably her young years:

Majn toxter, wu bistu gewezn?
Bajm šwiger un šwer,[3]
Wos[4] brumt wi a ber,
Muter du libe, du majne!

Majn toxterl, awu oste dortn gezesn?
Af a bank,
Kejnmol nit geramt,[5] etc.

Majn toxter, awu oste dortn gešlofn?
Af der erd,
Kejnmol nit gekert, etc.

Toxterul'u,[6] wos ot men dir gegebm cu kopn?
A zekele hej,
In harcn iz wej, etc.

---

[1] I should like, *G.* [2] Maiden, *H.* [3] Mother-in-law and father-in-law, *G.* [4] Who, *G.* [5] Cleaned, *G.* [6] Sl. dim of *Tochter.*

Toxterul'u, in wos ot men dir gefirt?
In kowanem[1] wogn,
Mit ajzn bašlogn, etc.

Toxterl, iber wos ot men dir gefirt?
Iber a brik,
Kejnmol nit curik, etc.

Toxterul'u, mit wos ot men dir gefirt?
Mit a ferd,
Jung in der erd,
Muter du libe, du majne!

Equally pathetic are the songs that sing of widowhood. This is a far more common occurrence among Jews than among other people and causes much greater inconveniences to the helpless woman. It is caused either by the natural occurrences of death or by self-assumed exile to escape military service which is naturally not to the tastes of the Jew, as we shall see later, or frequently by ruthless abandonment. This latter case is the result of early marriages in which the contracting parties are not considered as to their tastes; often the young man sees in himself awakening an inclination for higher, Gentile, culture, but he finds his path impeded by the ties of family and the gross interests of his consort. If he can, he gets a divorce from her, but more frequently he leaves her without further ado, escaping to Germany or America to pursue his studies. His wife is made an "agune," a grass-widow, who according to the Mosaic law, may not marry again until his death has been duly certified to:

Oufn barg štejt a tajbele,
Zi tut mit ir por brumen,[2]
Ix hob gehat a guten frajnd
Un ken cu im nit kumen.

Bexen[3] treren tuen zix
Fun majne öjgen rinen,
Ix bin gebliben wi a špendele[4]
Ouf dem waser šwimen.

[1] Covered with iron bands, *R.* [2] Coo, *G.* [3] Brooks, *G.* [4] Chip, *G.*

Gor di welt iz ouf mir gefalen,
Zajt ix bin gebliben alejn,
Zic ix dox tog un naxt
Jomerlix[1] un wejn.

Tajxen treren tuen zix
Rinen fun majne öjgen,
Ix zol hoben fligelex,
Wolt ix cu im geflöjgen.

Lejgt zix, kinderlex, ale arum mir,
Ajer tate[2] iz fun ajx fartriben .
Klejne jesomin[3] zent ir dox
Un ix bin ejn almone[4] gebliben.

As sad as the widow's is the lot of the orphan. Fatherless and motherless, he seems to be in everybody's way, and no matter what he does, he is not appreciated by those he comes in contact with. There are many songs of the dying mother who finds her last moments embittered by the thought that her children will suffer privations and oppression from their stepmother and from other unkind people. There are also beggar's songs which tell that the singers were driven to beggary through loss of parents. The following verses touching in their simplicity recite the sad plight of an orphan:

Waser šoumt, waser šoumt,
Tut men ganc wajt hern,
Wen es štarbt der foter-muter,[5]
Gist der josem[6] mit treren.

Der josem gejt, der josem gejt,
Der josem tut gor umzist,[7]
Lajt šacn,[8] lojt zogn,
Az der josem tejg gor ništ.

---

[1] Lamenting, *G.* [2] Father, *P.* [3] Orphans, *H.* [4] Widow, *H.* [5] Parents, *G.* [6] Orphan, *H.* [7] In vain, *G.* [8] Judge, *G.*

Der josem gejt, der josem gejt,
Un in car[1] un in pajn,
Lajt šacn, lajt zogn,
Az der josem iz šiker[2] fun wajn.

Ba majne frajnd, ba majne frajnd
Wakst wajc un kerner,
Ba mir josem, ba mir josem
Wakst dox groz un derner.

Gotun'u,[3] Gotun'u,
Gotun'u du majn,
Wos hostu mix nit bešafn
Mit dem mazl[4] wi majne frajnd?

The tender feelings of love, replete with sorrows and despair, are left almost entirely to women; men are to busy too sing of love, or less romantic in their natures. But they are not entirely devoid of the poetic sentiment, and they join the weaker sex in rhythmic utterance, whenever they are stirred to it by unusual incidents that break in on their favored attitude of contemplation and peaceful occupations. Such are: military service, the "pogroms" or mob violence and riots periodically instituted against the Jewish population, expatriation and the awful days of Atonement. On these occasions they rise to all the height of feeling that we have found in the other productions, and the expression of their attachment to their parents, wives and children is just as tender and pathetic. The Russian Jew is naturally averse to the profession of war. He is not at all a coward, as has been demonstrated in the Russo-Turkish war, in which he has performed many a deed of bravery; but what can be his interest to fight for a country which hardly recognizes him as a citizen and in which he cannot rise above the lowest ranks in civil offices or in the army, although he is called to shed his blood on an equal footing with his Christian or Tartar fellow-soldier? Before the reign of Nicholas, he was regarded beyond

[1] Worry, *H.* [2] Drunk, *H.* [3] Sl. dim. of *Gott.* [4] Good luck, *H.*

the pale of the country's attention and below contempt as a warrior; he was expected to pay to the support of the country, but was not allowed to be its defender in times of war. He easily acquiesced in this state of affairs, and learned to regard the payment of taxes as a necessary evil and the exemption from enlistment as a privilege. Things all of a sudden changed with the ukase of Emperor Nicholas by which not only military service was imposed on all the Jews of the realm, but the most atrocious régime was inaugurated to seize the persons who might elude the vigilance of the authorities. A whole regiment of "xapers," or catchers, were busy searching out the whereabouts of men of military age, tearing violently men from wives, fathers from infant children, minors from their parents. The terror was still increased by the order of "cantonment," by which young children of tender age were stolen from their mothers to be sent into distant provinces to be farmed out to peasants, where it was hoped they would forget their Hebrew origin and would be easily led into the folds of the Greek-Catholic Church. Let us hear a rhymed version of the calamity, composed at the time of its occurrence:

Es iz arousgekumen an ukaz, a men zol nemen idiše kinder in xajil,[1]
Bin ix antlofn[2] far cwancig majl;
Bin ix gelofn, gelofn,
Un ix ob mir di weg farbroxn.[3]
Az ix ob di weg farbroxn,
Ob ix in a grub arajngetrofn;
Bin ix gezesn draj misles,[4]
Bin ix geworn azej wi a mes;[5]
Dernox ob ix gezen, a štibele štejt wajt on der zajt,
Ob ix gerexent, az[6] dortn zajnen[7] nit kajn menc'n un nit kajn lajt;
Bin ix cugegangn, ob a klap geton in tir
Un ix o gebetn: "Efent mir!"
Tut zi a blik af majn cure,[8] wi ix bin tejt.
"Ci kent ir mir nit gebm a štikl brejt?"

---

[1] Army, *H.* [2] Ran away, *G.* [3] Lost my way, *G.* [4] Day and night, *H.* [5] Corpse, *H.* [6] That, *G.* [7] Are, *G.* [8] Face, *P.*

Hob ix ogegesn,[1] ix o genumen benčn,[2]
Zajnen gekumen di xaper,[3] wos xapm di menčn,
Hobm zej mir gefirt ibern mark un ibern gas,—
Fregt a junger man: "Ci hostu a pas?"
Zog ix: "Ix hob geton dem pas cu farlirn;"
Hobm zej mix genumen rewidirn:
Hobm zej mix ousgeton[4] biskn[5] hejln[6] lajb,
Fregt a man: "Cu hostu ajn wajb?"
Hob ix zej geentfert: "Ix hob dox a wajb mit a klejn kind,
Az ox un wej[7] cu majne bitere zind!"
Fun jener cajt on, cajt[8] Idn hobm gezen di like lewone,[9]
Fun jener cajt on hot men nit kajn guts un nit kajn nexome.[10]
.....

A me nemt idiše kinder cum prijom,[11]
Zegent zax[12] der guf[13] mit der nešome.[14]
Biter iz unzer lebm wi di tejt,
Az idiše kinder darfn[15] gejn in šatnes[16] geklejt,—
Der Bejre,[17] wos[18] zict in zibeten himl, alejn farštejt.
Got, Got, wos[19] bist zax fun unz bejres,[20]
Du wejst dox wejl, az mir hobm nit kejn andere brejres:[21]
Deriber kenen mir nit hitn kejn šejres,[22]
Betn mir dir, Ribejnešelejlem,[23] du zolst unz mejxl zajn[24] unzere awejres[25]
Dajn štrof tuen mir dox mekabl-bejahawe[26] oncunemen,
Ober in harcn tut unz zejer klemen,
A me nemt a xosn[27] fun a kale[28] un cum prijom nemen,—
Betn mir dir, Ribejnešelejlem, a[29] du zolst unz fun goles[30] arousnemen!
.....

This rhymed chronicle of the event lies at the foundation of many later lyrical expressions dealing with the aversion to military service, even at a time when it was divested of the horrors

[1] After eating, *G.* [2] Say the benediction, *French* (?). [3] Catchers, *Sl.* [4] Undressed, *G.* [5] Up to, *G.* [6] Bare, *G.* [7] Woe, a common formula of regret, *G.* [8] Since, *G.* [9] Eclipse of the moon, *H.* [10] Joy, *H.* [11] Enlistment, *R.* [12] Bids good-by, *G.* [13] Body, *H.* [14] Soul, *H.* [15] Must, *G.* [16] Cloth woven of mixed, woolen and flaxen threads, which is prohibited by the Mosaic law, *H.*; see Deut. XXII, 11. [17] Creator, *H.* [18] Who, *G.* [19] Why, *G.* [20] Abandoned us, *H.* [21] Choice, *H.* [22] Religious observances, *H.* [23] Lord of the world, *H.* [24] Forgive, *H.* [25] Sins, *H.* [26] As our burden, *H.* [27] Bridegroom, *H.* [28] Bride, *H.* [29] That, *G.* [30] Captivity, *H.*

of Nicholas' régime. Under the best conditions, the time spent in the service of the Czar might have been more profitably used for the study of the Bible and commentaries to the same, is the conclusion of several of such poems:

Ix gej aruf afn gas,
Derlangt men a ges'rej:[1] A pas, a pas!
A pas, a pas hob ix geton farlîrn,
Tut men mir in prijom[2] arajnfîrn.
Fîrt men arajn in erstn xejder,[3]
Tut men ojs[4] majn muters klejder.
Ox un wej[5] iz mit mir ges'en,
Wos ix ob mir nit arumgezen!
Fîrt men mir arajn in andern xejder,
Tut men mir on soldatske[6] klejder,
Ox un wej iz mir nit ges'en, etc.
Fîrt men mir arajn in s'ul[7] s'wern,
Gist zax fun mir tajxn trern.
Ox un wej iz mir nit gesen, etc.
Ejder[8] cu trogn dem kejsers hitl',[9]
Beser cu lernen dem kapitl',[10]
Ox un wej iz mit nit ges'en, etc.
Ejder cu esn dem kejsers kaše[11]
Beser cu lernen Xumes[12] mit Raše.[13]
Ox un wej iz mir nit ges'en, etc.

Other soldier songs begin with a detailed farewell to parents, brothers, sisters and friends, after which follows a recital of the many privations to which the Jewish soldier will be subjected; in all of these, the forced absence from wife or bride are regarded as the greatest evil:

Soldatn, soldatn zajnen mir[14] ale:
Ejner lozt[15] a wajb, der anderer a kale.[16]
Frajtik cu naxt[17] muzn mir wejnen un klogn,
Šabes[18] in der fri muzn mir ajn biks trogn.

---

[1] They suddenly cried out, *G.* [2] Enlistment *R.* [3] Room, *H.* [4] Doff, *H.* [5] Woe, *G.* [6] Soldier's, *R.* [7] Synagogue, *G.* [8] Rather than, *G.* [9] Cap, *G.* [10] Chapter (of the Talmud), *G.* [11] Buckwheat mush, *R.* [12] Pentateuch, *H.* [13] Commentary, *H.* [14] We are, *G.* [15] Leaves behind, *G.* [16] Bride, *H.* [17] Friday evening, *G.* [18] Saturday, *H.*

The cup of bitterness has never been empty for the Jews that inhabit the present Russian Empire: they had been persecuted by Poland, massacred by the Cossacks, and are now exiled from the central provinces of Russia. Each massacre, each "pogrom" has given rise to several poems, in which God is invoked to save them from their cruel tormentors, or in which there are given graphic descriptions of the atrocities perpetrated on the unwary. Like the soldier songs, they vary in form from the chronicle in rhymes to the metrical lyric of modern times. The oldest recorded rhymed chronicle of this kind is the one that tells of the blood bath instituted in the Ukraine in the middle of last century. The simple, unadorned recital of inhumanities concocted by the fertile imagination of a Gonto, a Silo, a Maxim Železniak, produces a more awful effect than any studied poem could do:

Owinu šebašomaim![1] Wi azöj[2] kensti dos cizejen,
Ukrajner Idn zol azöjne[3] gröjse cores[4] gešejn?
Batejl meolejnu[5] di gröjse gzejre[6] fun di Hejdamakn!
Balter Idn hot der roše[7] Silo giton trejnkn, brokn[8] un hakn.
Gzejres košes[9] azelixe,[10] wi iz giert[11] giworn in der welt?
Gonte ot hojx[12] klejne kinder mejmis[13] giwezn in nox dem ginemen gelt.
Dam raw[14] hot zix wi riškes[15] waser in di gasn gigosn,—
Drazner Idn hobn nox merer[16] fun Balter ginosn.
Hereg raw[17] hobn di Hejdamakn in file štet gimaxt,
Humaner un Hejsiner Idn hobn zej biz einem imgibraxt.
Wegam[18] un hojx klejne hobn zej gištoxn un farbrent,
Waber[19] hobn zej gibinden un lebedik[20] dem boux gitrent.
Zaam[21] a gröjser coren iz ouf Žavatiner Idn ousgegosn giworn,
Železniak hot zej frier baroubt. dernox ale farlojrn.
.....

[1] The first words in each odd line are Hebrew, and consequently the pronunciation of these does not suffer the vocalic decay of true Judeo-German words; the purpose of introducing these will be explained in the second chapter. Our Father in Heaven. [2] How, *G.* [3] Such, *G.* [4] Sufferings, *H.* [5] Free us. [6] Evil fate, *H.* [7] Evildoer, *H.* [8] Cut to pieces, *G.* [9] Great fatalities. [10] Such, *G.* [11] Heard, *G.* [12] Also, *G.* [13] Kill, *H.* [14] Much blood. [15] Gutters, *Little Russian.* [16] More. [17] Great slaughter. [18] Also. [19] Women, *G.* [20] Alive, *G.* [21] Insolence.

Riböjnöj šel öjlom,[1] Her fun der welt, wi host di dos gikent cizejen,
Rejgroder Idn hobn ejns dos andere gikejlet[2] alejn.
Šema caakosejnu[3] Got, unzer gišrej zolsti hern in farnemen,
Šaregroder dukes[4] Barnicki benš[5]— er hot zix far unz onginemen.
Towou lefonexo kol roošom[6] dos šlexts fun di Hejdamakn zol kumen far dir, Her fun der welt,
Tojšia,[7] in helfn zolsti ale, wos hobn zix far unz gištelt!

It is no wonder, then, that the Jew takes a gloomy view of life and that whenever he rises to any generalizations, he gives utterance to the blackest pessimism. One such poem depicts the vanities of human life, into which one is born as into a prison, from which one is freed at best at the biblical age of three score and ten, to leave all the gold and silver to the surviving orphans. There is but one consolation in life, and that is, that "töjre," learning, will do one as much good in the other world as it does in this:

Az ox un wej[8] iz cu menšn gešen,
Er ot opgelebt a welt[9] un zix nit arumgezen.
Bald wi der menš wert geborn, faršrajbt men em cum jejmamise[10]
Un wi er kumt af der welt, iz im erger wi in a tfise.[11]
Gold un zilber un perl tut jeder menš mit zix nit nemen
Nor mit zajn bisele töjre[12] *tut er zix dortn un do nit šemen.*
.....
Zibecig jor iz gor dem menšns lebm,
Un ejb[13] er iz a roše,[14] tut men ejx im dos nit gebm.
Xaswešolem[15] az[16] der menš firt zax nit gut,
Farlejft zajn bisele[17] jorn gor in bejze blut.
Tejtn-tanc muzn ale tancn,
Un far di jesöjmim[18] iberlozn in gancn.
.....

And yet, under all these distressing circumstances, the Jew finds pleasure in whole-hearted laughter. His comical ditties

---

[1] Lord of the world. [2] Butchered, *Sl.* (?). [3] Hear our cry. [4] Count, *H.* [5] Bless, *French* (?). [6] May their evildoings come before thee. [7] Thou wilt save. [8] Woe, *G.* [9] He has lived a life time, *G.* [10] Dying day, *H.* [11] Prison, *H.* [12] Learning, *H.* [13] If, *G.* [14] Evildoer, *H.* [15] God forbid, *H.* [16] If, *G.* [17] Few, *G.* [18] Orphans, *H.*

may be divided into two classes, into those in which he laughs at his own weaknesses, and those in which he ridicules the weaknesses of the Khassidim, a fanatical sect, among whom the Rabbis are worshipped as saints and are supposed to work miracles; this sect is very numerous in Poland and South Russia, is very ignorant, and has opposed progress longer than the Misnagdim, to which sect the other German Jews in Russia belong. As an example of the first class may serve a poem in which poverty is made light of:

Ferd hob ix fun Pariz :
Draj on kep, zwej on fis.
Ladricem bam, ladricem bam.
A rok ob ix fun gutn tux :
Ix ob fun im kajn brekl[1] dux.[2]
Ladricem bam, (bis).
Štiwl[3] ob ix fun gutn leder :
Ix ob fun zej kajn brekl feder, etc.
Kinder ob ix a draj tuc :[4]
Ix ob fun zej kajn brekl nuc, etc.

Ject ob ix zix umgetraxt[5]
Un ob fun zej a barg aš gemaxt.[6]
Ladricem bam, ladricem bam.

The sensuality, intemperance, and profound ignorance and superstition of the "rebe," or Rabbi, of the Khassidim, and the credulity and lightheartedness of his followers form, perhaps, the subject of the most poems in the Judeo-German language, as they also form the main subject of attack in the written literature of the last forty years. One example of this kind of poetry will suffice for our purpose:

A xûsidl'[7] iz gigŏn[8] interwäjgens,
Ot im gitrofn a šlak räjgns :
Maxt[9] dus xûsidl' "bim bim bam,"
Maxt dus xûsidl' "bim bim bam."

[1] Bit, *G.* [2] Breath, *R.*; the whole means: I have not a bit of it. [3] Boots, *G.* [4] Dozen, *G.* [5] I considered the matter, *G.* [6] I made a hill of ashes of them, *i. e.*, I got away with them. [7] A young Khassid, *H.* [8] Went, *G.* [9] Says, *G.*

Wi der xûsidl' i gikumen in krejčme[1] arân,
Ot er ungiojbm[2] ci trinkn wân :
Maxt dus xûsidl' etc.
Wi der xûsidl' ot ungiojbm bromfn[3] ci trinkn
Ot er ungiojbm ci der šikse[4] ci winkn :
Maxt dus xûsidl', etc.
"Xûsidl', xûsidl', wus winksti ci mîr?"
"'x o dir gibraxt kort[5] af a mondîr!"[6]
Maxt dus xûsidl', etc.
"Räbe, räbe,[7] nûsn moje,[8]
s' i nit kajn šikse, nor ajn alte goje!"[9]
Maxt dus xûsidl' "bim bim bam,"
Maxt dus xûsidl' "bim bim bam!"

---

[1] Inn, *Sl.* [2] Began, *G.* [3] Brandy, *G.* [4] Young Christian girl, *H.* [5] Cloth, (?). [6] Uniform, *R.* [7] Rabbi, *H.* [8] Give me money, a Hebrew sentence. [9] Christian woman, *H.*

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POPULAR POETRY OF THE RUSSIAN JEWS.

II.

The structure of the oral folksongs in no way differs from that of the rhymed literary productions of the German Jews during the past three centuries. The rhyming couplet had been used by them in ethical treatises, story books and even didactic works to express a thought in the form of an enthymeme where the lines composing the same are related to each other as antecedent to subsequent. As these books were read, or chanted, there was no necessity to regulate the length of the lines by any prosodical rules, and they could vary at will within any reasonable compass, as in the following example:

Kommt in dein haus ein gast gegangen,
Gütlich soltu ihn ontfangen.
Mit gütlichen anzlit soltu ihm sein essen un' trinken vortragen,
Deinen kummer un' gebrechen soltu ihm nit klagen.

Similarly, the Russian Jews use the traditional rhyming couplet in those verses that chronicle a historical event or inculcate an ethical truth. The real folksongs, however, are set to music, both in Germany and Russia, and require a more regular distribution of syllables. In the Mother Country they were generally sung to existing German tunes; in their eastern home they readily adapted themselves to the new melodies of their environment. Thus, to their German inheritance were added Lithuanian and Polish airs in the northwest, and Polish, Little Russian and Roumanian tunes in the southwest, and these, in their turn, further diversified their external structure.[1]

[1] Among the old Judeo-German songs, mentioned in Steinschneider's catalogue of Judeo-German literature in the *Serapeum*, vols. ix and x, the following numbers refer to unmistakably German tunes to which they were sung: No. 61, nach der Melodie, "Dietrich aus Bern;" No. 63, "Es liegt ein Schlössl in Oester-

The short chronicles and didactic poems are frequently arranged in couplets or stanzas beginning with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet ("nox'n alefbejs")[1] or they are introduced by Hebrew words of well-known passages in the Bible or the Ritual, as if to anticipate or accentuate the meaning of the complete sentence in Judeo-German. Sometimes both methods are combined[2] to ensure the retention of the whole in the proper order. By these contrivances they have escaped the ravages of time, and have been handed down comparatively intact from former generations.

Except for an occasional local word or dialectic rhyme it is not, as a rule, possible to ascertain where a certain song may have originated, as it seldom remains confined to the locality of its birth, and is subject to continuous variations to meet the

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reich;" No. 110, "Junger Markgraf." See also the statements to that effect in *Ueber eine Sammlung deutscher Volks- und Gesellschaftslieder in hebräischen Lettern*, Felix Rosenberg, Braunschweig, 1888. That the modern songs are set to music, is generally indicated in the title-page or the introduction to the printed collections, as, for example: lider su zingen mit zejer šejne melodien; šejn cum zingen un cum lezen; mit zejer šejne melodien. In one of his books Zunser (see p. 55) informs us:

Öjb ir lejent in bixel majne lider,
Un di melodi hot men ajx nit ibergegeben,
Iz dos wi a fotografiše bild, libe brider,—
Daxt zix ales rixtig, nor es felt leben. (Introduction to "Hamnagejn.")

while another, B. Z. Rabinowič (in "Der Disput fun Šiler mit a Klöjznik), thinks he must offer an apology for not having composed a tune for his poem:

Mit wos far a melodi ir wet špilen,
Welen di werter gewis noxtanzen!

The use of Slavic popular airs is attested by their specific mention: the tune of Lermontov's "Spi mladenec" has been appropriated by J. L. Gordon (see p. 54) and A. Goldfaden (see p. 51) for their cradlesongs; the latter mentions a Little Russian air "Oj ty divčina zaručenaja," while Schafir (see p. 43) has also Polish melodies, one from the famous opera "Halka," by Moniuszko.

[1] Cf. the verses on p. 21 of this periodical where the words A, Biter, Got, Deriber are in alphabetic sequence; the other verses are evidently corrupt. The poem on p. 24, beginning Az ox un wej iz cu menšn gešen is well preserved as is indicated by the words Az, Bald, Gold, . . . Zibecig, Xaswešolem, Tejtntanc.

[2] Such are the verses on p. 23 in which the odd lines begin with Hebrew words in alphabetical order.

requirements of the dialects.[1] The many migratory individuals, such as the itinerant musicians, wedding jesters and young Talmudical scholars, have caused the oral literature to be shifted around. Even now every newcomer reputed to have new songs is besieged by the young people of the town until his repertoire has been committed to memory or taken down in writing.[2] Many of the song collections of known authorship have become, in this manner, the common possession of the people long before they found their way into print.

The poetry so far discussed for the most part represents the older stage of the popular creation, and its authors can no longer be ascertained. Side by side with it there has grown up, since the middle of our century, an extensive printed literature[3] which

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[1] The incorrect rhymes junge, gringe, (p. 7), kumen, šwimen (p. 11) point to a Southern or Polish orgin of the verses.

[2] Zunser, who did not scruple to make use of other people's property (see p. 55) objects, in "Kol-rina," to the people's appropriation of his songs in the following words:

Wi me hot mix gehert amol ci cwej,
Iz šöjn giwen af morgen gešriben baj zej:
Es hot mir fardrosen zejer mî, xleben,
Un hob zej beser a fartigen, a gedrukten gegeben.

[3] This is, as far as I can ascertain, the first attempt at writing a history of the printed poetry of the Russian Jews; I am, therefore, fully aware of its shortcomings and beg the reader to accept it, such as it is, until increased facilities will enable me or some other investigator to get at more exact facts. The modern Judeo-German bibliography is hopelessly confused and disappointing; it is impossible to tell when a first edition appeared, except by indirect inferences; dates and authors' names are frequently absent, or the same work may be accredited to different writers in different editions. Under these conditions errors are unavoidable. The only work that may be profitably consulted on this branch of Judeo-German literature is *Jüdischdeutsche Volkslieder aus Galizien und Russland*, herausgegeben von Lic. Dr. Gustaf H. Dalman. (Zweite Ausgabe). Berlin, 1891. (Schriften des Institutes Judaicum in Berlin, No. 12.) The following errors, which destroy the sense, must be corrected in this work: p. 2, l. 16, change *geht* to *git-gibt;* p. 6, line 20, *Sabobones*, is a noun and means "superstition; p. 11, after line 9 add *Un er sagt—Tnoim* (contract of marriage) *tor men bei uns nit zerreissen;* p. 13, l. 11, *asone* = such; p. 18, l. 7, add *un di Maass;* p. 24, l. 19, read *Hat sie schon gefehlt;* p. 43, l. 21, read *Zehndlige* (scores) for *Zehn jährige;* p. 44, l. 2 from bottom, read *plutzlung* (suddenly) for *mein' Pflanzung;* p. 45, l. 8, read *Zwit* (bloom) for *Zicht;* ib. l. 25, add *wasch ab deine Trähren;* p. 67, l. 13, read *gefehlt* for *gefüllt.*

lays claim to some artistic merit and pursues different aims than the spontaneous ebulitions of the popular mind, without ever dissevering its close relation to the people. It has developed steadily from its humble beginnings and has, within the last decade, received its highest attainable polish in the ghetto of New York.

The first impetus to the use of Judeo-German for literary purposes, other than the obsolescent one of ethical instruction, was given by the educational innovations of Nicholas I. On the one hand he brought terror in their midst by the inauguration of the military régime; but, on the other, he tried to rouse them from their lethargic state of several centuries and to open the way for their mental and social amelioration by the foundation of Rabbinical schools in Žitomir and Wilno, and by admitting Jews to the Gymnasia. The Jews were, however, slow in taking advantage of their new privileges as they had reason to be wary of Danaid gifts, and because during the long period of their political and social enslavement they had become accustomed to look with fear and contempt on Gentile culture. The small minority that was enlightened enough to make use of the opportunity thus offered to them, were either driven by force of circumstances to withdraw from the Jewish community, or they entered into a continuous struggle with their own correligionists, braving many annoyances and excommunication. The latter undertook to raise the ignorant and superstitious masses from the slough of physicial and moral degradation into which they had fallen. This they attempted to do by speaking to them in the native Judeo-German dialects of their immediate surroundings, and by issuing books of attractive contents in which they could couch in the pleasantest manner possible the bitter truths which they were intended to convey.

Of such a character were the dramas of Ettinger, Aksenfeld and Levinson that were circulated in manuscript form in the thirties and forties; in these we find always represented the struggle between the newer, progressive element with the sordid, dishonest men of the older type,—the victory of educa-

tion over ignorance, of order over disorder. But far more productive of good than these lengthy works were the songs that could easily be committed to memory and that were wedded to well-known old, or catchy new, tunes that ensured their rapid dissemination. Ettinger, Gottlober, Michel Gordon almost simultaneously introduced this kind of song into Russia, while, prompted by similar motives, Ehrenkranz was singing to his native Galicians.

In the latter country German influence began to make itself felt in the beginning of the century, but the Jewish populace at large, especially the Khassidim who are in the vast majority, clung tenaciously to old, retrograde ideas and jealously excluded the light from without. Their proximity to German Austria has been unfavorable for the development of a specifically Judeo-German literature, while those who did not come under the sway of German literature accepted the books of the numerically more important and intellectually more active Russian and Polish Jews. Galicia has produced but few popular poets of its own, and of these Ehrenkranz was the only one to exert an appreciable influence on the poetry of their neighbors.

Benjamin Wolf Ehrenkranz (better known as Welwel Zbaržer, *i. e.*, from Zbaraž) composed more than one hundred songs in the popular vein ; these he collected in four small volumes after they had been in circulation for a quarter of a century and published them in 1865.[1] At that time Judeo-German was looked upon with contempt, and so he did not dare issue them except with a Hebrew versified translation. This method was also adopted later, in the eighties, by his countrymen Apotheker and Schafir. His songs are by no means all didactic. The most of them had

[1] Under the conditions mentioned in a previous note it is not possible to give first editions ; I shall merely quote those that are in my possession, or that are known to me from other sources ; where a bilingual title is given, I shall transcribe only one, preference being given to the German. *Makel-Noam. Folkslieder in polnisch-jüdischer Mundart mit hebräischer Übersetzung* von W. Ehrenkranz-Zbarzer. (4 Hefte.) Gedruckt bei Berl Lorje in Lemberg, 1969 (sic !), 1868, 1873, but Dalman mentions the edition of 1865. *Makal Chowlin.* Verlag des Wolf Ehrenkranz. Przemy'sl, 1869.

been written from a mere desire to amuse, but their tone is always healthy and refined. They have become true folksongs and are disassociated from the author, whose name even has frequently been forgotten. The discussion of a few of these from the first volume will illustrate their tenor and manner of composition. In "Di Naxtigal" the caged nightingale sings of his sorrows as he sees the birds outside merrily flitting about, and as he recalls his former freedom in their company:

In dem štajgl[1] štej ix mit gröjs jisurim,[2]
Zej wiln mix nor mučen ;[3]
Zej maxn sudes[4] Purim
Un ferlangen ix zol kwičen.[5]
Ax, wi ken men damals zingen,
Wen di cores[6] fresen?
Di naxtigal iz dercu gecwungen :
Zi ferdint damit ir esen.

The caged nightingale is no other than the poet who sings for the crowd:

Ax, ix wejs ništ, wos cu ton,
Ix kon mir kajn ejce[7] geben!
Ix hob lust nor cu flien,
In der höjx cu šweben!
Zing ix ništ jorenlang,
Hob ix nöjt un lejden,—
Wos že pöjel[8] ix mit majn gezang?
Ix bin ferköjft baj jejdn!

"Di Goldne Ur" is one of a very common type of songs of dispute, such as the Body and the Soul, the Soul and the Angel of Life, the Scholar and the Talmudist, Summer and Winter, Water and Wine, to which nearly all the popular poets take recourse. The author asks the watch for the reason of its heartbeats which seem to him incompatible with its life of joy,

[1] To facilitate the reading of the verses, the text is given throughout in a normalized dialect,—a Lithuanian variety; in consequence, rhymes have been destroyed here and there Cage, *G.* [2] Pain, *H.* [3] Torment, *R.* [4] Feasts, *R.* [5] Warble, *G.* [6] Troubles, *H.* [7] Advice, *H.* [8] Obtain, *H.*

having the privilege of being worn by fine ladies and gentlemen, of never growing old, of being clad in gold and precious stones. Each stanza of the question ends with the words:

Wos felt dir, wos klapt dir dos herc?

and the watch replies that it must incessantly work, that it is everybody's slave, that it is thrown away as useless as soon as it stops,—so, too, is man:

Blajb ix nor štejn in ruhe ejn minut,
Zogt šöjn a jeder, er darft mix šöjn gor nit.
Dos iz a bajšpil wegn mensen af der erd:
Kajn menš darf ruhen, wer es hot nor a wert;
Öjx menšen di rajxe, wos zenen in glik,
Plogen zix un ruhen kejn öjgenblik.
Er gejt nobel geklejdet, šejn ousgecirt,—
Wer wejst, wos far a šmercen er špirt?
Er hot öjx fil cores un lajden on šir,[1]
Es klapt im zajn harc punkt glajx wi mir!

Upon this follows what is generally known as a "cušpil," a song treating the contrary of the previous subject, or serving as a conclusion to the same. The "cušpil" to "Di goldne Ur" is entitled "Gut cu leben, nit cu zorgen." In "Der Folksdixter" he sings of the evil plight of the folk poet who does not receive his recompense upon earth:

Wen gejt es dem dixter gut
Un lebt on zorgen?
Af der welt awade[2] **nit,—**
Er darf ales lajen un borgen;
Es gejt im gut af jener welt,
Er wajst nit fun kajn lejd,—
Dorten darf er ništ kajn gelt,
Er meg zingen cuzecterhejt![3]

to which follows, as a "cušpil," "Dem Dixters Trejst,"[4] in which he humorously tells of his escaping the troubles of the city by a walk into the country where the shepherd is his com-

[1] Without end, *H.* [2] Certainly, *H.* [3] Uutil he bursts, *G.* [4] Consolation, *G.*

panion. Similar pairs are "Der Elender zuxt di Ruhe" and "Af der Erd ruht men nit," and "Der Wanderer" and "Di Trejst." A number of the songs describe the sorrows of various occupations, while others are devoted to humerous descriptions of the ignorance, intemperance and lightheartedness of the Khassidim, or scourge the selfishness of the Moldavian Jews. One of the most popular of his poems is "Der Bejs-hakwores," the Cemetery. The subject is of common occurrence in Judeo-German literature. One of the stanzas runs as follows:

Do zet der menš, az er iz nor a nar,
Nariš iz zajn gance haswore:[1]
Do ligt der knext glajx mit dem har,
Der betler glajx mit dem srore:[2]
Do weren sonim[3] cwišen zix šolem,[4]
Zenen wi brider gešworen,—
Kinder, di welt iz nor a xolem,[5]
Der menš iz cum štarben geboren!

The last two lines form the burden of each stanza. The "cušpil" to it is "Kolzman[6] me lebt, darf[7] men on dem Töjt fargesen"—the Jewish version of the "memento vivere."

Another very popular singer of the forties and fifties was Berel Broder.[8] He chose for his specialty the description of the many troubles of the various trades and occupations of his countrymen,—of the shepherd, the gravedigger, the wagon-driver, the slater, the school-teacher, the go-between, the usurer, the precentor, the smuggler. They are all arranged according to the same scheme, and begin with such lines as: "ix nebex[9] bidne[10] pastix,"[11] ix krumer šames,"[12] "ix nebex šindelšleger," "ix finsterer balagule,"[13] "ix nebex zindiger melamed,"[14] and so

[1] Striving, *H.* [2] Oppressor, *H.* [3] Enemies, *H.* [4] Make peace, *H.* [5] Dream, *H.* [6] As long as, *H.* [7] One must, *G.* [8] *Širej-Zimro. Drajsig herlixe Broder lider*, in rejn jideš lošen; jeder lid bazingt zejer šejn far ale klasen menšen. Me lerent fun zej zejer fil xoxme, den zej zogen ous rixtig dem xarakter fun jederen un es iz a grójs fargenigen cu lezen. (Printed at I. Bakst's), Žitomir, 1882. [9] Alas, *Sl.* [10] Poor, *P.* [11] Shepherd, *P.* [12] Beadle, *H.* [13] Waggon-driver, *H.* [14] School-teacher, *H.*

forth. The best of these, and one of the most popular of the kind, is probably the "lid fun ajn greber:"

Ix lax dox ous di gance welt,
Fun gröjs biz klejn:
Afile[1] der fun fil gelt
Muz in majn dire[2] arajn gejn!
Fun dem gresten ašires,[3]
Fun der gemolter štub,
Fun di ousgemebelte dires
Aher in dem finsteren grub!
.....

Wos zenen dos far a bejner,
Wos ix hob do gefunen?—
Es iz gewen a menš a šejner,
Wos er hot zax ibergenumen:[4]
Er iz gegangen ousgecöjgen,[5]
Kedaj[6] er zol ouswajzen hexer,—
Af dem ort fun di öjgen
Zenen cwej tife lexer.

Grod acind[7] mit dem haken
Hob ix geštert dajn ru,
Getrofen hob ix af dajne baken?
Wen ix kuk dir gut cu:
Az du host gelebt, host du gor gešajnt
Un host di greste roles gešpilt,
Acind, af dajn umglik gor hajnt
Hob ix af dajne öjgen gefilt.

Berel Broder has written also two songs of dispute, "Day and Night" and "Shoemaker and Tailor." The first is remarkable in that each praises the other, instead of the more common discussions in which the contending parties try to outrival each other in the display of their virtues, "as in "A Lid fun a Šuster mit a Šnajder." In the latter the two engage in a lively dispute in which the tailor seems to have the better of the argument,

[1] Even, *H.* [2] Dwelling, *H.* [3] Wealth, *H.* [4] He was proud, *G.* [5] Erect, *G.* [6] In order that, *H.* [7] Now, *G.*

but the shoemaker has his last word. Among his miscellaneous poems there are some that deal on natural phenomena, such as the great fire in Brody, the appearance of a comet, and one relates a shocking murder. The style of these two Galicians and their very subject matter was soon appropriated by a very large class of folksingers in Russia who amuse guests at wedding feasts. Henceforth Russia with Poland became the seat of popular poetry, and Galicia reflects the light that issues from that country. The tone is changed, the main object being now to instruct rather than to amuse, to become militant for truth and culture rather than sing in the gentle manner of Ehrenkranz and Berel Broder. Here, then, would be the proper place to speak of the evolution of popular poetry in Russia, but as Galicia furnishes us with but two more noteworthy names in modern times, we shall do well to discuss them now. Apotheker, in his collection "Die Leier,"[1] pursues just such aims as his Polish or Russian fellow-bards, and is entirely without any local color. In the introduction to the songs he gives a review of them from which their tenor is easily learned. He says:

"One will at once see from my song 'What do I Want?' that the sentiment that this is a turbulent world in which no one is satisfied with what he has is an unworthy one, and that all must do their share for the common weal. The song 'What am I?' shows how many rich and proud people are brought to starvation when they lose their wealth only because they have learned no trade and regard work below contempt, whereas the artisan is always self-sufficient. 'Sleep my Child' shows how so many Jews suffer from their birth to their dying day through neglected education and superstition."

The other poems are of a similar character; they are all written in a pure dialect, without any intermixture of German words, but their poetical value is very small as they are much too didactic. Of far higher importance and literary worth are

[1] *Haneewel. Die Leier. Zehn schöne Volkslieder über die wichtigste Fragen der Juden.* Auf Hebräisch und Jüdischdeutsch, mit sehr schöne Melodien. Verfasst von David Apotheker, Druck von Elias Heilpern, Czernowitz, 1881.

the productions of his contemporary, Bajrach Benedikt Schafir.[1] Being well versed in German and Polish literature, he generally imitates the form of the best poems in those languages, and often paraphrases them for his humble audiences. His language is now almost the literary German, now his native dialect, according as he sings of high matters or in the lighter vein. His collection, "Melodien aus der Gegend am San," he divides into four parts: Jüdisch-nationale Lieder, Gedenklieder, Gefühlslieder, and komische Lieder, the first three with an elegy on the death of Sir Moses Montefiore forming the first part, the comical songs the second part of the collection. In the introduction "Mein Leid, mein Kind!" he tells us how his songs are meant for the common people to whom the literary languages are inaccessible:

Sühndel![2] Volkslied! Unerschlafft—
Intelligenz, dein' Schwester,[3]—
Schäm' dich nicht, du bist die Kraft,
Du wirst fest uud fester!
Jene liebt ein kleiner Kreis
Edler, armer Hörer,—
Du hast in dem Volk, ich weiss,
Tausende Verehrer.
....
Gib a Tanz, a Lach, a Knack!
Willst du Freunde kriegen,
Musst in Laune und Geschmack
Von der Welt sich fügen;
Doch sei ständig[4] dein' Idee:
Bessern, reformiren;—
Geh', mein Kindleb,[5] Kindleb, geh'
In die Welt spazieren!

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[1] *Melodien aus der Gegend am San. Gedichte und Lieder in galizischjüdischem Dialekte* von Bajrach Schafir aus Przemysl. (Zwei Theile.) Verlag von A. Faust's Buchhandlung, Krakau, 1886. *Freudele die Mame*, Verfasser und Verleger Bajrach Benedikt Schafir. Lemberg. Druck von Ch. Rohatyn, 1882. [2] Dear son, *G.* [3] This sister is the Hebrew language in which Schafir has written many poems. [4] Always, *G.* [5] Dear child, *G.*

Durch Galizien, Süd' und Nord
Osten und im Westen,
Jeder wird sich mit dein' Wort
Heilen, quicken, trösten!
Dich wird zählen der Banquier
Zwischen Wertpapieren,—
Geh', mein Kindleb, Kindleb, geh'
In die Welt spazieren!
....

Grüss' die Freund' im ganzen Land,
Am San, Prut und Dniester,
Wo dein Vater ist bekannt,
Wo man kennt dein' Schwester,—
Lemberg, Brody, Kolimei
Grüsse von Schapiren!—
Geh,' mein Kindleb, Kindleb, geh'
In die Welt spazieren!

The most of the comical poems are in the form of dialogues, in which a German, *i. e.*, a Jew of the Reformed Church, discusses with a Khassid the advantages of education; in others he describes the ignorance of the latter; but many do not rise above the character of theatre couplets. In the lyrical part, however, the tone is better, and in some of the songs he rivals the better folk-singers of Russia. His "Midnight Prayer" and "Greeting to Zion" are touching expressions of longing for the ancient home, just as "Przemysl, du mein' teuer Wiegel" and "Heimweh" are full of yearning for his native country. Of the four "Gedenklieder," two deal on the famous accusation, in 1883, of the use of Gentile blood by the Jews in the Passover ceremony; one describes the fire in the Vienna Ringtheater, while another narrates a similar catastrophe in the town of Šeniava.

During a period of fifty years Galicia has produced but few poets. Of these Ehrenkranz and Berel Broder belong equally to the Judeo-German literature of Russia, while Schafir, both on account of the Germanized form of his language and his imitation of German models, has become purely a local bard,

without any appreciable influence on the popular poetry of the neighboring country. Here a long series of writers have evolved in the same time varied kinds of songs, from the simple verses of Michel Gordon to the elaborate productions of Frug and the exquisite poems of Rosenfeld in America.

Few poets have been so popular in Russia as M. Gordon[1] and Berenstein[2] were half a century ago, the first singing in the Lithuanian variety of the language, the other in a southern dialect. Both published their collections in Žitomir in 1869, and Gordon wrote an introductory poem for the book of his friend Berenstein. In this he indicates the marked contrast that exists between the productions of the two. While the first writes to chide superstition and ignorance, the other sings out of pity for his suffering race; while the one sounds the battle cry of progress, the other consoles his brothers in their misery; the one, fearing prosecution from the fanatic Khassidim whom he attacks, sent his poems out into the world anonymously, the other signed his name to them. And yet, however unlike in form and content, they are both pervaded by a warm love for their people whom they are trying to succor, each one in his own way. Among Gordon's poems of attack are his famous "Štej ouf, majn Folk," "Di Boršt,',[3] "Di Maske,"[4] "Ix ken ništ farštejn," "A Mošel,"[5] "Majn Widuj."[6] The two first stanzas in "Štej ouf, majn Folk" strike the keynote to all his songs of that category:

Štej ouf, majn folk, genug dir šöjn šlofen !
Štej ouf un max šöjn dajne öjgen ofen !
Wos iz af dir alejn azöj a gröjs plog,
Wos du alejn šlofst biz halben tog ?[7]

Di zun iz lang šöjn arous af der welt,
Zi hot šöjn ale menšen af di fis geštelt,
Nor du alejn ligst gekorčet,[8] geböjgen
Un halst nox fest farmaxt[9] dajne öjgen.

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[1] Širej. *Jidisch Lider fun Michel Gordon.* Warsaw, 1889. On p. 37 he mentions his edition of 1869 at Žitomir. [2] *Magazin fun jidiše lider far dem jidišen folk* fun S. Berenstein ous Kamenec-Podolsk. Žitomir, 1869. [3] Turnip soup, *P.* [4] Liquor, *H.* [5] Allegory, *H.* [6] Confession, *H.* [7] Midday, *G.* [8] Bent, *R.* [9] Closed, *G.*

In this poem he preaches to his race that they should assimilate themselves in manners and culture to the ruling people, that they should abandon their old-fashioned garments and distinguishing characteristics of long beard and forelock, and that they should exchange even the language in which he sings to them for the literary language of the country:

Du rejd nit a lošen,[1] wos kejner farštejt,
Dajn lošen iz fremd, farmišt, fardrejt,
Dos lošen-hamdine[2] iz klor un rejn,
Du rejd im, šrajb im, zol jeder farštejn!

Assimilation was the cry of all the earnest men among the Russian Jews before the eighties, when the course of events put a damper on the sanguine expectations from such a procedure. The other poems mentioned are of a humorous nature and have been enormously popular. In "Di Bord" a woman laments the loss of the beard that her husband had had shaven off, thus becoming like the despised Germans, *i. e.*, the Reformed Jews. "Der Boršt" and "Ix ken ništ farštejn" are excellent pictures of the ignorance and superstitious awe of the Khassidim before their equally ignorant and hypocritical Rabbis, and the other two deal on the stupidity of the teachers of children, and of the undue use of spirituous drinks upon all occasions of life. Two of his earliest poems are devoted to decrying the evil practice of early marriages in which the tastes of the contracting parties are not at all considered. In the one entitled "Fun der Xupe"[3] he paints in vivid colors the course of the married life of a Jew from the wedding feast through the worries of an ever-increasing family, the helplessness of the father to provide for his children, the final breaking up of the family ties. The recurring burden of that song is:

Fun der xupe cu der sude[4]
Halt zix, halt zix mit der dude![5]
Es iz šöjn nox alen,
Es iz šöjn farfalen!

---

[1] Language, *H.* [2] Language of the country, *H.* [3] Marriage baldachin, *H.* [4] Marriage feast, *H.* [5] Keep your bagpipe, *P.*, *i. e.*, keep your troubles.

The tuneableness of the whole and the catching melody to which it is actually sung, the lifelike picture which it portrays, and the final stanza

Der sof[1] iz nebex[2] nit kajn guter !
Dos zenen šuldig foter muter,—
Zej maxen alejn fun zejer lib kind
Aniim,[3] ewjönim[4] a ganc gezind ![5]

have done a great deal to diminish the practice, while the other, "Majn Deje,"[6] which is addressed to a girl, advising her to exercise her own free will and reasonable choice of her life's companion, has helped to eliminate misery and to introduce the element of love in the married stage.

In his advocacy of reform Gordon had in mind the clearing of the Jewish religion from the superstitions of the ages which had almost stifled its virgin simplicity, not an abandonment of any of its fundamental principles in the ardent desire for assimilation. True culture is, according to him, compatible with true piety, and a surface culture with its accompanying slackness of religious life is reprehensible. When he saw that so many had misunderstood the precepts of those who taught a closer union with the Gentiles in that they adopted the mere appearances of the foreign culture and overthrew the essential virtues of their own religion, he expressed his indignation in "Di ware Bildung un di falše Bilung," of which the final stanza is:

Di ware bildung maxt gut un mild,
Di falše bildung maxt šlext un wild,—
Der war-gebildeter iz a fajner man,
Der falš-gebildeter iz a šarlatan.

Gordon has also written a ballad "Di Štifmuter," which has given rise to a large number of popular imitations. In this he relates of a mother whose rest in her grave is disturbed by the tears of her child who is maltreated by a stepmother; she sends her voice up to God, interceding in his behalf, and then to her weeping child assuring him that God has heard her prayer.

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[1] End, *H.* [2] Alas, *H.* [3] Wretched people, *H.* [4] Paupers, *H.* [5] Family, *G.* [6] Opinion, *H.*

Berenstein was no less enlightened a man than Gordon. His acquaintance with German literature is evidenced by his motto from Körner and an occasional quotation from Schiller, and his several epigrams which he frankly acknowledges as translations or adaptations of German originals. Thus it happens that Schiller's "Hoffnung" has been popularized among the Russian Jews in the form of a stanza of a long poem, "Di falše Hoffnung." It runs in the rifacimento as follows:

Di welt iz gröjs, di welt iz wajt,
Der menš zuxt nor zajn glikštern,—
Di hofenung trejst im in der šlexter cajt,
Er wet dir šajnen, du west oufgerixt weren.
Gildene berg zogt zi im cu,
Touzender maxt zi im fun ajn grošen,
Wi a funk fajer, azöj iz zi,
Ot šajnt zi, ot lajxt zi, ot wert zi farlošen.
Zi bawajzt zix in getlixen geštalt,
Zi kwikt im itlixes ejwer,—[1]
Azöj wert er gro, azöj wert er alt,
Azöj balejt zi im in kejwer.[2]

Except for these literary allusions, Berenstein wrote in the true popular vein. His "Dos Wigele," in which he makes use of the well-known verses "Hinter Jânkeles wigele,"[3] has become as universal as the oral cradle song. Its last stanza enjoins the child to sleep well in order to gather strength for the sufferings of the next day, and this pessimistic view of life becomes ever after the prevailing tone in the many cradle songs that have been written by younger men. "Der Šlof" is a variation on the motto from Körner's Tony put at the head of it: "Der Schlummer ist ja ein Friedenhauch von Himmel—Schlummern kann nur ein spiegelreines Herz." "Junge Trern" is one of the very few love lyrics that appeared in print before the second half of the eighties. In "Di Štikele Zejf" he shows that with soap you cannot wash off the blot from your brow, the sorrow from your heart. "Di lejdige Flaš" describes

[1] Member, *H.* [2] Grave, *H.* [3] See p. 6 of this periodical.

the loneliness of him who has lost his wealth, and with it his friends. As a "cušpil" to it follows a pretty lyric, "Di Trejst." A "cušpil" bearing the same name follows an elegy upon the death of an only son. Several of the poems are devoted to the praise of the Sabbath, and only two are given to the sarcastic attacks on the Khassidim. In the latter the words are put in the mouth of a Khassid who prays to God that he may send again darkness instead of the victorious light in order that his ilk might the more securely shear their sheep.

Another very popular poet of the sixties was A. Goldfaden, who in 1876 became the founder of the Jewish theatre. His literary activity may be roughly divided into the period before, and the period after the establishment of the theatre. The first only is the subject of our present discussion. Like the other two, he published his works in Žitomir, which, on account of the Rabbinical school opened there in the forties, had come to be the rallying ground of all those who were advocating a progressive Judaism. As the title of his first collection indicates, "Dos Jidele,"[1] his poems are all devoted to strictly Jewish matters. Although he occasionally takes recourse to the method of Ehrenkranz or, foreshadowing his future career, even descends to the use of theatre couplets, yet the most of his poems have an individual character differing from all his predecessors. He treats with great success and in a large variety of rhymes the allegorical and the historical song, sometimes as separate themes, more often by combining them.

One of the best allegorical poems is the triad "Der Jixes-šidex," the aristocratic marriage. In the first, "The Betrothal," he tells us how the humble Egyptian slave, Israel, was betrothed to his aristocratic bride on Mount Sinai. God was the father who gave away the law to his son, and Moses was the *šadxen*,

[1] *Dos Jidele* exists in a number of different editions; the first appeared in 1866, but I have only later editions. The most accessible is the one with the title: *Dos Jidele. Jidiše lider ouf prost jidišer šprax* fun Awrohom Goldenfaden, ejn Altkonstantiner, herousgegeben fun J. Bernas un N. A. Jakobi. Warsaw, 1891. The cradle song is given in his *Di Jidene.* Feršidene gedixte un *teater in prost-Jidišen* fun Abraham Goldfaden. Odessa, 1872.

the go-between, the never failing concomitant of a Jewish marriage. The second part describes a typical Jewish wedding, Israel's entrance into Jerusalem:

Dort gejen Jidlex
Un zingen lidlex,
Un špilen af fidlex,
Un af timpanes;
Di fajfen šreklex,
Di klingen mit gleklex,
Di klapen mit šteklex
Af barabanes;[1]
Dos zenen di Lewiim[2] ale,
Wos hoben in der cajt gegilt[3]
Un hoben baj der xosen-kale[4]
Cu der xasene[5] gešpilt.

The third, "Arop fun di Kest,"[6] shows how Israel misused his opportunity while living in the house of his wife's father during the years that immediately follow the marriage. He committed adultery with Idolatry, and God drove him out of His home; but in consideration of his pious ancestry, He allowed him to take his wife along with him on his wanderings, and He promised him that after ages of repentance he would send him the Messiah to restore him to his former home.

A similar triad, but of a historical nature, is his well known "Dos Pintele[7] Jid," in which he successively portrays the virtues, the sufferings and the vices of his race. The last part is identical in sentiment with Gordon's "Štej ouf, majn Folk!" and inculcates tolerance for the various religious parties of the Jews and love of culture:

E, di ale nariše zaxen warf šöjn awek!
Jisrolik, bist zix ništ a nar, loz dos nemen an ek,[8]
Loz nemen an ek sine,[9] Xsidim[10] un Dajčn![11]
Wos töjg[12] zidlen,[13] wos töjg zix pačn?[14]

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[1] Drums, *R.* [2] Levites, *H.* [3] Were powerful, *G.* [4] Bridegroom and bride, *H.* [5] Wedding, *H.* [6] Board, *H.* [7] Trace, *G.* [8] End, *G.* [9] Hatred, *H.* [10] Khassidim, *H.* [11] Germans, *G.* [12] What good is it, *G.* [13] Objurgate, *G.* [14] Strike each other, *G.*

Der iz a Jid, der iz a Jid, mir zenen ale Jiden !
Lomir[1] cwišen zix beser leben cufriden !
Far der kurcer kapote[2] ot na[3] dir a grošen,
Abi[4] dos pintele Jid iz in im nit farlošen !

"Di Holoweške"[5] relates the destruction of the Temple, "Riwkes Töjt" gives a Talmudical version of Rebecca's death, and "Kain" tells of Cain's wanderings over the face of the earth after his killing of his brother, and his vain search of death. This poem is the most popular of his Biblical songs; its first three stanzas are these:

Wi a föjgel fun zajn nest
Werd ganc wajt farflöjgen
In a finster ort in west,
Wajt fun menšenöjgen,

Azöj bin ix hajnt geworen,
Ox un wej cu mir !
Zint[6] majn bruder iz farlöjren,
Iz kajn ru cu mir.

Wuhin ix kum in jeden ort,
Her ix köjles[7] šrajen,
Antlöjft[8] awek, ot[9] gejt dort,
Ot gejt der gazlen[10] Kain !

Among the other songs, many of which are of sterling worth, there must be mentioned his Lullaby, whose wide-spread dissemination is only second to Berenstein's cradle song. Out of the score of writers who must be classed among this category, two deserve special mention, Linetzki and I. L. Gordon. The first is the author of the satirical novel "Dos xsidiše Jingl" which has become a Judeo-German classic; the other was a famous Hebrew scholar and Russian journalist. Linetzki[11] has written but few poems that may be called folksongs. Of these some treat, in the manner of the other poets, the conflict of cul-

[1] Let us, *G.* [2] Coat, *R.* [3] Here take, *R.* [4] If only, *P.* [5] Firebrand, *R.* [6] Since, *G.* [7] Voices, *H.* [8] There, *R.* [9] Run away, *G.* [10] Murderer, *H.*
[11] *Der bejzer maršelik. Satiriše folkslider* fun Jicxok Joel Linetzki. Kiev, 1863.

ture with the ignorance of the Khassidim, but with this difference: they are all variations on the theme that the servile imitator of the Gentiles is no better than the stubborn advocate of the old régime; as he expresses it in the song "Cwej Kec[1] in ejn Zak:"

A Xosid an azesponim,[2]
A Dajč[3] a durak,[4]
Cwej glajxe naronim,[5]
Cwej kec in ajn zak!

Two of his poems are versified versions of Psalms, and one, "Der gewiser Mai," deals with the joy of May pure and simple, presenting the rare example of a song of this kind at this early time:

Menšen, štejt ouf ganc fri!
Erwaxt fun ajer geleger!
Zet di šejne harmoni
Fun dem natirlixen zejger![6]
Bejmlex[7] roušen, fejgelex zingen,
Melodien zimlen[8] fligelex alerlej,
Hejšereklex tancen un špringen,
Un cum takt halt cu der salawej![9]

All the above-mentioned poets belong to what might be termed the German school. These men were more or less intimately acquainted with German literature, and frequently borrowed their subject matter from that source. They all were active at a time when the conflict between the old religious life of the Russian Jews and the modern tendencies was at its highest. They looked for a solution in the reform which since the days of Mendelssohn had become the watchword of progress in Germany, and they hoped to abandon in time their homely dialect for the literary language. It is this conception of Judeo-German as a mere corrupted form of German that has given it the name of Jargon, an appellation which has stuck to it as the designation of the language. In the meanwhile the better classes were receiving

[1] Cats, *G.* [2] Impudent person, *H.* [3] German, *G.* [4] Fool, *R.* [5] Foo!s, *G.* [6] Clock, *G.* [7] Little trees, *G.* [8] Buzz, *G.* [9] Nightingale, *R.*

their instruction in Russian schools, and in the seventies all the progressive elements found themselves alienated alike from German influence and from a closer contact with their humble correligionists. Even such men as had begun in the forties and fifties as folkpoets had abandoned their dialect for the literary language of the country. I. L. Gordon,[1] the Hebrew scholar and poet, had given promise to become the greatest of the popular singers. In the seventies he wrote only in Hebrew and Russian, and it was only in the eighties, when the riots and expatriation of the Jews had destroyed all the hopes that had been placed in assimilation, that he returned to compose songs for the consolation of his humble and unfortunate brothers:

Majne šwester un majne brider,
Welxe horewen[2] di gance wox
Un brexen nebex di kranke glider
Un šlepen wi oksen dos šwere jox:
.....
Far ajx, majne oreme šwester un brider,
Wos kenen kejn naxas[3] nit af der welt,
Far ajx hob ix dos bixele lider
Cum cajtfertrajb cuzamengeštelt,

and in another poem, in praise of the Sacred language, dated in the year of the *pogroms*, 1881, he, the Russian journalist, burst out against the Russian assimilators in the following words:

Un unzer najer junger, dor[4]
Di študirte, di maškilim,[5]
Wos hoben awekgelejgt šöjn gor
Di Gemore[6] un dem Thilim,—[7]
Zej leben nebex gor on a tolk[8]
Zorgen gor far zejere tušes,[9]
Zej hoben fargesen zejer folk
Un rejden mit unz af rusiš.

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[1] *Sixas-xulin* Lieder in der Volkssprache von I. L. Gordon. Druck von I. Unterhendler. Warsaw, 1886. [2] Work, *Little Russian.* [3] Pleasure, *H.* [4] Generation, *H.* [5] Learned, *H.* [6] Gemarah. [7] Psalms, *H.* [8] Reason, *R.* [9] Souls, *R.*

I. L. Gordon has written but few Judeo-German poems, and of these not more than nine or ten are folksongs; but they represent the highest perfection of the older school of the popular bards. He has not been surpassed by any of them in simplicity of diction, warmth of feeling and purity of language. Two of his oldest poems, "Der Muter Abšid" and "A Majse[1] fun farcajten,"[2] relate, the first, the hardships of a Jewish soldier in the forties, the second, the horrors of the régime of "xapers," the dishonesty and inhumanity of the "kahal," the representative body of the Jewish community. The newer poems are all of a humoristic nature, except the one devoted to the praise of "the Law written on Parchment," which has been the consolation of the Jews during their many wanderings and persecution:

Un ict? iz šöjn beser? Lozt men unz cufriden?
Hot men šöjn amol derkent, az[3] mir Jiden
Zenen öjx menšen azöj wi di andern?
Welen mir nit mer in der welt arumwandern?
Wet men zix af unz mer nit baklogen?
Dos wejs jx nit, dos ken ix ajx nit zogen.
Ejns wejs ix, es lebt nox der alter Got öjben,
Di alte Töjre[4] unten un der alter glöjben—
Drum zorgt nit un hoft af Got dem liben
Un af di hejlige Töjre af parmet[5] gešriben!

Parallel with the German school, now overlapping in its territory, now pursuing its own course, ran the class of the poetry that had for its authors the "badxens" or "maršeliks," the wedding jesters. In mediæval times the jester's function was to amuse the guests at the wedding, while the more serious discourses were delivered by the Rabbi and the bridegroom. In Russia he has come to usurp all these functions: he improvised verses upon the various stages of the marriage ceremony, delivered the solemn discourses to bridegroom and bride, and furnished the wit during the banquet. His improvisations were replete with Biblical and Talmudical allusions and Cabbalistic combinations of the Hebrew letters of the names of the married

[1] Story, *H.* [2] Bygone times, *G.* [3] That, *G.* [4] Law, *H.* [5] Parchment, *G.*

couple; his verses were mere rhyming lines without form or rhythm, and his jests were often of a low order and even coarse.[1] The name of "badxen" came to be the byname of a coarse, uncultured jester. A change for the better was made in the second half of the fifties by Eliokum Zunser, then but in his teens, who had conceived the idea of making the *badxen* a singer of songs rather than a merry person. He was, no doubt, led to this innovation through the many new folksongs of Gordon, Ehrenkranz and Berel Broder that were then current among the people and that were received with so much acclamation, both on account of their pleasing contents and the excellent tune to which they had been set. In 1861 he published eight of his songs which he had been singing at weddings.[2] One of these at least, "Der Zejger," is merely a differently versified form of Ehrenkranz's "Di goldene Ur," which must have reached him in its oral form,[3] as the same was printed only in 1865. Zunser

[1] It is not uncommon in Judeo-German literature to meet with descriptions of the old-fashioned *badxen* and his craft, but probably the best illustrations of his performances are to be found in the following two chapbooks: *Der krumer maršelik mit a blind ojg.* Es iz sejer šejn cu lejenen di lider, wos der maršelik hot gezungen, un wi er hot xosen-kale bazungen, un zej zenen nox kejn mol nit gedrukt geworen: Kukariku! Der maršelik iz do! Warsaw, 1875. *Gešixte fun a zeltenem bris un a genarte xasene.* Teater in fir akten fun Ulrich Kalmus. Warsaw, 1882. Pp. 65–72.

[2] Mr. Zunser, who is now the proprietor of a printing office in New York, informs me that there have been published by him sixty-five various collections of his songs. Many of these, very likely, are repetitions, but even making due allowances, the number of his poems is very great. A list of a few of the earlier chapbook editions will be given here: *Di ajzenban mit nox cwej tajere lider.* Wilna, 1876. *Širim xadošim. Naje axt lider.* Wilna, 1885. *Hamzamer. Naje fir lider.* Wilna, 1878. *Hamnagejn. Fir naje herlixe lider mit melodien.* Wilna, 1875. *Kol rina. Naje axt lider.* Wilna, 1885.

[3] Such adaptations and plagiarisms are very common in Judeo-German literature. So Zunser's "Der alter Foter" in the "Hamnagejn" is nothing else than a different form of Berel Broder's "Wi ajn Tate kumt cum Kind." R. Katzenellenbogen in his *Jidiše melodien, oder folkslider*, Wilna, 1887, points out that Goldfaden's "Dos Jidel" was translated from a German poem in a Vienna periodical, which does not prevent Katzenellenbogen from translating it again. M. Gordon complains in his collection, mentioned above, that a well-known writer (Goldfaden) has cribbed his "Štej ouf, majn Folk." The same Katzenellenbogen, in another place of his book, tells that Gottlober's popular "Der Klöjzner"

possessed an excellent voice and had received a good musical training, and his songs and tunes spread with astonishing rapidity through the whole breadth and length of Russia wherever Jews lived, and became also popular in Galicia and Roumania. This innovation came to stay, and within a short time the host of *badxens* throughout the country began to sing songs at wedding feasts. Whoever could, composed songs of his own; whoever was not gifted with the power of versification sang the songs of others. These *badxens* were the most potent factors in the dissemination of the songs of the above-mentioned poets long before they were accessible in their printed form.

Since it was the *badxen's* business to amuse, it was natural for Zunzer to adopt the manner of Ehrenkranz and Berel Broder, rather than of his countrymen Gordon and Goldfaden. But to the Russian Jew that is amusing which gives him food for reflection, and nature and its manifestations are interesting to him only in so far as they interpret man in all his aspects of life. It is this facile power of resolving external facts in the alembic of his introspective imagination that has brought Zunser so near to the people and that has made him so popular. He does not possess the poetical instincts of his contemporaries Gordon and Ehrenkranz, and many of his poems are mere plagiarisms from other singers, yet they have become better known in the form in which he has sung them than in their original verses.

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was, like his own "Dos Lid fun dem Klöjzner," taken from a Vienna publication. The offence is really not so great as might appear, for it is the very essence of popular poetry to arrange for the use of the people already existing literary productions rather than to create new ones. Then, again, it happens that a song wanders about masterless until adopted by some one. Two amusing cases of this kind may be pointed out here: Ehrenkranz's "Der Wanderer" (see p. 40) is given almost word for word in the collection ascribed to Berel Broder. A more interesting case is the following: in I. L. Gordon's collection there is a humoristic paraphrase of Heine's "Die Zwei Grenadiere." Gordon is beyond every suspicion as a plagiarist; yet it was proved in the "Vosxod," 1886, 5, by N. Goldenberg that the poem belonged to the latter. Gordon then showed in a reply that the song had so long been ascribed to him (it having never been printed) that when he found it among his other manuscript poems, he did not hesitate to ascribe it to himself. There had been no attempt here at deception.

All the characteristics of the poets whom he imitates are repeated in Zunser: we have the dispute in "Der Jišuwnik[1] mitn Štotman," "Di alte Welt mit di naje," "Lid fun dem Zumer mitn Winter," "Di Blum," "Di Ajzenban," "Der Prom,"[2] "Der ajzener Šrank," "Der Zejger," "Di Fejgl" are examples of songs of reflection spoken of above. There also are poems in which he scourges the hypocrite, the usurer, the inordinate love of innovation and fashion, and some give good pictures of various incidents in the life of a Russian Jew.

Zunser has had many imitators, and their name is legion.[3] Few of them have been so versatile or have become so popular as he. A new factor was added in the dissemination of popular poetry by the establishment of the Jewish theater in 1876, one that has led to its rapid deterioration of form and contents. In the meanwhile the Judeo-German literature has evolved to a state of unknown perfection, and the political reverses of the Jews drew into it the best available forces. This gave rise to a

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[1] Countrymen, *H.* [2] Ferry, *R.*

[3] I subjoin here a partial list of popular poetry that cover the whole period discussed in this essay; some of these are creditable performances, and would have to be considered in a more extended study of the subject:

Di Litwačke. Feršidene jidiše lider, dacu ejn lid "Di Litwačke" fun M. Danzig. Odessa, 1870.

Sipure jeme Kedem. Fir feršidene lider far gute brider. S. M. Wolman. Wilna, 1877.

Der disput fun a šiler mit a klözjnik. Verfast fun B. Z. Rabinowič. Wilna, 1877.

Der glik. Zeks naje lider. G. Rawič. Wilna, 1893.

Der najer zinger. Ferfast fun Alter Fišzon. Warsaw, 1890.

Šir nexmod oder di rejne nešome. Arousgegeben fun Xonen "Badxen" me-Smargon. Wilna, 1877.

Di sfire. Mir cejlen ale sfire. Ferfast fun Jajnkef Zizmar "Badxen" me-Grodno. Wilna, 1883.

Širim neimim. Halal Klebanow me-Borisow. Wilna, 1889.

Di bludne fejgel. Same author. Wilna, 1889.

Šir xaim oder naje finf lebenslider. Ferfast fun S. X. Lewin me-Bialistok. Warsaw, 1891.

Di najeste herlixste lider. Gedixtet fun dem dajčjidisen gezangskomiker Leon Špacer aus Barštin. Lemberg, 1887.

Reb Tanxum der mekabel. Ejnige naje jidiše folkslider. Ferfast fun A. R. Z. Jassy, 1883.

new kind of poetry, one that commands the attention of a wider public.[1] The social conditions of the Russian Jews in the diaspora in England and America has still farther changed the aspect of their popular poetry, and through the occurrences of the past seventeen years they have come under the sway of Russian, Polish, German and English literary influence, such as had been entirely inactive before. Poetry has become an art.

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[1] On page 37 mention was made of Ettinger and Gottlober, and yet no space has been allotted to them in this essay, as at the time of writing I knew of them only by heresay. During my trips in Russia this summer I acquired the lately printed collection of Ettinger's songs, but they contain nothing of a nature to be classed among folksongs. I also called on Gottlober in Bělostok. This venerable poet, now nearly ninety years old, is of failing health and could not be spoken to. His daughter could not identify with certainty any of her father's poems except the few printed in various periodicals. These, of very wide dissemination and of a high order of perfection, are nearly all remodellings of German originals and resemble the poems of M. Gordon.

Another poet, Katzenellenbogen, mentioned in a note, has been purposely omitted from the list of folk poets, as he has never become popular, although he fully deserved to be classed among them.

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